



**AMDG**  
**23RD SUNDAY IN**  
**ORDINARY TIME**  
**YEAR A**  
**10TH SEPTEMBER 2017**



**‘Love is the one thing  
that cannot hurt your neighbour’**

OPENING PRAYER

O God, by whom we are redeemed  
and receive adoption,  
look graciously upon your beloved sons and daughters,  
that those who believe in Christ  
may receive true freedom  
and an everlasting inheritance.

‘No man is an island’. We all live in different groups, families, communities, neighbourhoods. Today’s readings invite us to reflect on the best way to behave so as to live peacefully with everyone around us.

In the *first reading*, the prophet Ezekiel is portrayed as a watchman warning society of potential dangers. Failure to do this will result in him being held responsible for not encouraging the wicked man to renounce his bad ways.

The *psalmist* urges us to listen to the voice of God and to trust him.

For St Paul, the best way to live peacefully in society is by mutual love. The Commandments can all be summed up by the phrase ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’ (*second reading*).

In the *Gospel*, Jesus gives us practical advice for smooth relationships between people. Meeting and praying as a group, however small, will ensure that he is present amongst us.

This week, then, I may want to focus my prayer on any area of conflict that I know of – and to resolve, with the help of Jesus, to play my part, however small, in contributing to its resolution.

## SECOND READING: ROMANS 13: 8-10

**A**void getting into debt, except the debt of mutual love. If you love your fellow men and women, you have carried out your obligations. All the commandments: You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and so on, are summed up in this single command: You must love your neighbour as yourself. Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour; that is why it is the answer to every one of the commandments.

In preparation for my time of prayer, I give myself a few minutes to still my mind, consciously bringing myself into the present moment.

I become aware of God's presence.

What mood am I in?

I hand any concerns and joys over to the Lord.

When I am ready, I read the text slowly and reverently several times, letting its message speak to me.

Am I drawn to a particular word or expression?

Perhaps I focus on the phrase: *You must love your neighbour as yourself.*

I ponder what that means in my life.

What is the Lord asking of me?

Who is *my* neighbour?

I may then want to ask the Holy Spirit what it means for me to love my own self in a wise and compassionate way.

How would that enrich my relations with others?

In time, I pray for those who, for many reasons, do not have love in their lives or may not realise God's deep love for them.

I thank God for his loving grace in my life, and in the lives of those I love.

Finally I bring my prayer to an end, saying:

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit ...*

## GOSPEL: MATTHEW 18: 15–20

**J**esus said to his disciples: “If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain any charge. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community; and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector.

“I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven. “I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.”

After coming to some inner quiet in the way I know works best for me, I become aware of God’s presence with and within me.

I slowly read the text above several times.

After each reading I pause a while and reflect: what has touched me?

Perhaps I go back to the first paragraph. Jesus speaks to his disciples, to me, about resolving conflict. I ponder.

I may be in the throes of a dispute, in my family, in my work, or in my community. In what ways is Jesus’s advice helpful?

Have I tried to take the steps he suggests? What happened?

I speak to the Lord about this, telling him simply, from my heart, how I feel about the situation.

Maybe, at the moment, my life is calm and conflict-free ...

but I can remember past difficulties involving me or someone close to me.

I spend a few moments recalling what happened. On whom did I call for help?

How did I deal with the hurt? What feelings am I left with?

Again, I tell the Lord about it and I listen to him.

I may now want to look at the last paragraph.

Do I ever have the opportunity to pray with others? What do I find different about praying in a group: a sense of mutual support, an enhanced awareness of the presence of the Lord, or ...?

In time, slowly, I take my leave and thank the Lord for being with me today.

## Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

Lord our God, in you justice and mercy meet.

*Old Opening Prayer*

O that today, you would listen to his voice! *Responsorial Psalm*

Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour.

*Second Reading*

For where two or three meet in my name,  
I shall be there with them.

*Gospel*

*This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:*

*Ezekiel 33:7-9; Psalm 94 (95); Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 18:15-20*



How does this image help me meditate on these readings?



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